

Body Lift Guide

A Guide for Anyone Needing Post-Weight Loss Surgery

What is Body Lift Surgery?

If you have lost a substantial amount of weight, you have most likely been left with pockets of remaining fat and loose, sagging excess skin. A body lift is a form of body contouring surgery which allows you to regain a more toned appearance, and improves the shape and tone of the underlying tissue following massive weight loss.

Following a body lift surgery, you should see a dramatic change to the shape and contour of your body. Areas of stubborn fat will have been removed and you should be left with a flatter, smoother and natural looking body. Results will vary slightly based on the patient. However, your doctor will explain the expected results prior to surgery.

How is a Body Lift Surgery Performed?

A complete body lift includes the abdomen, buttocks, waist, hips and thighs in one surgery. An incision is placed in the lower abdomen, across the hips and onto the buttocks. Tissue dissection is done on the tummy to rib cage and on the back, down the buttock. Excess skin and fat are then removed permanently from the abdomen, hips and buttocks. The muscles all along the mid-section will be tightened and excess skin and fat are removed, leaving a smoother more toned contour.

Patients having a body lift will be put under general anesthesia during the surgery. Depending on the patient, some liposuction may be needed in conjunction with the body lift in order to remove final stubborn fat pockets. Multiple layers of sutures are used to close up the incisions.



Following a body lift, results can be seen immediately. However, the final results can take up to two years to fully develop.

Who Can Perform a Body Lift?

Any surgeon is legally allowed to perform a body lift. However, plastic surgeons receive additional training via a residency program, and often become board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgeons (ABPS).

Although board certification is not required to perform a body lift, board certified surgeons can become members of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) or the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS). These organizations focus on patient advocacy and continuing education of plastic surgeons. They ensure that surgeons have a minimum of five years of surgical training and two years of training specifically in plastic surgery. They also ensure that your surgeon operates only in accredited medical facilities. Besides these qualifications, surgical experience is critical in performing a body lift. Seek a plastic surgeon who is both board certified and has experience in performing body lifts.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON BEFORE HAVING BODY LIFT SURGERY

- Are you certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery?
- How many years of plastic surgery training/experience do you have?
- Am I a good candidate for body lift surgery?
- Will I also need liposuction?
- What results can I expect post-surgery?
- Where will my surgery be performed?
- Where will my incision(s) be?
- If I smoke, when should I stop smoking?
- Do I need to stop taking any of my medications?
- What should I do post-op to get the best results?
- Will I need to take any medications post-surgery?
- When can I resume my daily routine and exercise?
- When is my follow-up appointment?
- How many follow-up appointments will I need?
- Are there any risks involved with this surgery, and if so, what are they?
- Do you have any before/after photos I can look at?
- How many body lifts have you performed?
- Can I talk with some of your previous patients?

Typical Results

This is a 38 year old female who weighed 340 pounds. She underwent RNY gastric bypass and lost 104 pounds.

After her massive weight loss, she did not like the excess skin and fat of the abdomen, hips, and buttocks. She underwent a 360 or circumferential body lift. Twelve pounds of skin and fat were removed. No liposuction was necessary.



TOP TEN THINGS TO PREPARE FOR BEFORE A BODY LIFT

1. Your weight must be stable for three months. Weight fluctuations greater than five pounds should be investigated. Undergoing a body lift while gaining weight is not optimal.

2. You should continue exercising and eating right. Your body will need these energy stores to heal. Before your body lift, you should build up as much muscle mass as you can.

3. A week before your body lift, get plenty of rest. In order to heal, your body needs rest.

4. Fill your prescriptions. After surgery, the last thing you want to do is to stand in line or wait in the car at the pharmacy waiting for your pain medications.

5. Prepare food. Order extra protein shakes and protein powders. Prepare foods that have high protein value and are easy to prepare. Plan to eat 75 to 100 grams of protein a day.

6. Prepare your house. Create a recovery headquarters. Get several comfy pillows. Order DVDs or new books to read. Place new batteries in your TV and DVD remote controllers. Have your cell phone handy and keep your cell phone charger bedside.

7. To minimize the chances of blood clots, you may want to order a leg squeezer. This machine sequentially compresses your calves and minimizes the chance of blood clots.



8. Arrange for pets and children. If you have a dog, you should have someone else take care and walk the dog for two weeks. If you have children who need to be carried and picked up, you should have someone else take care of them for two weeks. You should not lift anything for about two weeks.

9. To prepare for your recovery after a body lift, consider purchasing or renting a recliner. This is the best position because your back is bent, your abdomen is flexed and your knees are bent.

10. Consider purchasing or renting a walker. This will help steady you while you are walking.



TOP TEN THINGS TO DO AFTER A BODY LIFT

1. The most important thing to remember is to continue eating. To heal from a body lift, the nutritional goal set by the Registered Dietitian Association is 75 to 100 grams of protein a day.

2. It is essential to allow your body to heal. Rest is very important. The body lift is a big procedure; allow your body time to heal. Do not perform extra activities or plan on exercising for about two or more weeks.

3. If you are not too constipated from the anesthesia and pain medication, take enteric coated iron pills. During surgery, blood is lost and this blood loss can contribute to feeling “tired”.

4. Antibiotics can destroy your intestine’s normal bacteria. To reestablish the intestinal flora, eat some pro-biotic cultures every day.

5. Anesthesia and narcotics often lead to constipation. Take a stool softener twice a day. If you develop diarrhea, please notify your plastic surgeon. This can be a serious problem.

6. Every plastic surgeon has his or her own way “of doing things”. Please consult with your plastic surgeon before and after your body lift to determine your limitations and restrictions.

7. Compression garments flatten scars and minimize swelling and can help lead to a faster recovery. You should wear your compression garments as much as possible and consult with your plastic surgeon when to stop.

8. Most plastic surgeons use drains. For easy accessibility, you may want to log the drain outputs into your smart phone. This minimizes the chances of losing the drain record for an office visit.

9. Some medications which you were taking before the body lift may be very important to continue after your body lift. Essential medications include pills for hypertension, thyroid, and diabetes. Please consult with your plastic surgeon regarding which medications you should continue after your body lift.

10. Do not worry how the initial scar appears. It can take up to two years for a scar to fully mature. After your incision has healed, silicone creams and compression can be used to help minimize scarring.



Body Lift Surgery and the Future

A body lift is a major reconstructive surgery performed after massive weight loss. As with all post-weight loss surgeries, a body lift can help restore your body to a more natural look that complements your frame.

Results following your body lift surgery will be immediate, but can take a year or two to fully develop; as long as you eat right and exercise, the results should be long-lasting. Aging can cause natural sagging of the skin over time; however, the results of your surgery should still stand up to the test of time.

The body lift operation is only part of the process; it's also important to find a qualified board certified surgeon to help you on your journey. Your surgeon will advise you, prepare you for surgery, and monitor your post-op recovery and healing. You should feel comfortable with him or her, and be able to ask any questions that you have.

You may also wish to join an online support group such as RealSelf.com where you can talk with other pre- and post-op body lift patients. They can provide a measure of support and also advise you on what to expect during every stage of your journey.

Article by: RealSelf

Sources: : RealSelf plastic surgery specialist, J. Timothy Katzen, MD of 360 Body Lift, Beverly Hills, CA

About RealSelf

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